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Cancer researcher seeks asylum in Soviet Union with wife and 3 children

FROM COMBINED DISPATCHES

MOSCOW — The official Soviet news agency Tass reported yesterday that an American cancer researcher emigrated to the Soviet Union after being fired from his job because he opposed U.S. foreign policy.

The news agency said Arnold Lockshin, his wife and three children arrived in Moscow yesterday after being granted political asylum.

Tass said Mr. Lockshin — spelling his name "Lokshin" in the English language service — was a 47-year-old biochemist and oncologist who headed the cancer research laboratory at St. Joseph's Hospital in Houston, Texas, from 1980 until last month.

The man identified as Mr. Lockshin, a woman identified as his wife, Lorraine, and three children were shown on the Soviet television evening news. Speaking

Mr. Lockshin was quoted as saying that he had brought with him examples of what he claimed were FBI measures against his family.

in English, he told TV viewers that he and his wife had opposed the Vietnam War and had fought for social justice in the United States ever since.

"I am happy that this nightmare is once and for all behind me," Tass quoted him as saying. "We are in for a free life now."

"We thought this was a place where we could raise our children without harassment," Mr. Lockshin told a television interviewer.

"The more active we were in the anti-war movement and the louder we raised our voice of protest against the anti-democratic procedures fostered in our country, the more fierce and sophisticated was the persecution to which I and my family were subjected at home," he said.

Mr. Lockshin was quoted as telling Tass he and his wife made a "very difficult" decision to leave the United States after being persecuted for waging "an

active struggle against the dangerous aspects of the foreign policy of the Republican administration."

Mr. Lockshin was quoted as saying that he had brought with him examples of what he claimed were FBI measures against his family.

He said the family's telephone conversations were tapped, private mail opened, that they were followed and received provocative phone calls, Tass reported.

"This all finished with my being fired and threatening to physically destroy me, together with my three children, the oldest of whom is 15," Mr. Lockshin was quoted as saying.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Peter Martinez said, "The statements attributed to Mr. Lockshin, alleging that the U.S. government harassed him and threatened his life because of his political opinions are patently absurd."

In a statement issued last night, Mr. Martinez said Mr. Lockshin was free to travel to and from the United States, and is free to choose his place of residence.

FBI Spokesman Ray McElhaney said the FBI had no immediate comment on Mr. Lockshin's reported emigration.

In Houston, St. Joseph's Hospital spokeswoman Sue Sonnier identified Mr. Lockshin as a pharmacologist and chemist employed by a hospital affiliate known as The Stehlin Foundation. Mr. Lockshin worked in the hospital's cancer research lab from July 1980 until August when "his contract was terminated . . . because of job performance."

Mr. Lockshin was quoted as saying in Moscow that "Lorraine and I are deeply thankful to Soviet authorities that they deemed it possible to grant us political asylum. . . . Obviously, not everything that lies before us will be easy and simple, and perhaps one of the main difficulties will be to master the Russian language quickly and sufficiently fully."

Mr. Lockshin praised Soviet research into cancer and said he was ready to make a contribution, Tass said. It said he held a doctorate in philosophy and a bachelors' degree in biochemistry.

The news agency said Mr. Lockshin had done research work at Harvard University and the Russian version said he also had worked at the University of South Carolina. However, the English version identified the second school as the University of Southern California. Debra Allen, a University of South Carolina spokeswoman, said Lockshin had not

done any work at the school, and a spokeswoman at the University of Southern California said there was no record he had ever worked there.

Margery Heffron, a spokeswoman for Harvard University, said there is no record of an Arnold Lockshin in the Medical School's appointment records dating back to 1910. She said there also is no record of him with the Harvard Personnel Office since 1975.

Mr. Lockshin was mentioned last month in a news conference by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze at the Soviet Mission to the United Nations.

Replying to questions from American reporters about Soviet dissidents, Mr. Shevardnadze mentioned Mr. Lockshin's application for asylum, but provided no details.

Western communists have occasionally chosen in the past to live in the Soviet Union, but Mr. Lockshin's case appeared to be virtually without precedent.

The most recent known American defector was Edward Lee Howard, a former CIA operative who was granted asylum in Moscow last August.

Staff writer Bill Gertz contributed to this report.